

Questions and answers for our dear brethren who fell victim to the Erev-Rav Rabbis who fight a war against Mashiach!

QUESTION: Is it possible that someone may learn Torah and seem to love the Torah – yet at the same time may actually be denigrating the holy Torah?

ANSWER: We find in the Gemorah (Eruvin 64a) that Rabbi Acha Bar Chanina asks – *What is conveyed by the verse: “One who shepherds harlots will lose a fortune”?* *One who says regarding one part of the Torah that it is appealing and regarding another part of the Torah that it is not appealing will lose the fortune of the Torah!*

Rashi explains as follows: *The words “One who shepherds harlots - רועה זונות is an acronym for “It is appealing, therefore I will shepherd it - "זו נאה ורענה"”!* What Rashi means to say is that one who shepherds (i.e. learns) only the parts of the Torah that appear appealing to him (‘appealing’ in Hebrew is זו נאה – which is an acronym for זו נאה, – harlot) will eventually **destroy the honor of the Torah**. Furthermore, the Torah will eventually **be forgotten from him**.

This should impress upon us that **the honor of the Torah is evident only when we learn all its parts – including the wisdom of the Torah’s secrets** which has been clarified in Chasidut. **And one who – God forbid – negates the learning of Kabbalah and Chasidut and gives the impression that this part of the Torah is not appealing is directly diminishing the honor of the Torah. Therefore he is destined to eventually forget his Torah!** This is the understanding according to Rashi.

In spite of my impoverished understanding, I would also like to offer my own commentary. When the

Gemorah said that he *will lose a fortune*, this was said in reference to the fortune of the Torah that he will lose – and not a financial fortune. And it is well known that our sages impressed upon us that *The Torah is rich in one place and poor in another place* (Barayta of the thirty-two measures - in measure fifteen). If so, then certainly when someone negates the words of the Torah in one place since he finds interest only in the words of the Torah in another place, then per-force he remains poor in his Torah understanding and thereby loses the fortune of the Torah. If so, then ever the more so in our case, as **it is well known that any Torah knowledge which is missing the understanding on the level of the Torah’s secrets is certainly dry and poor** (as clarified in Tikunei Zohar #30). Perhaps this was Rashi’s intention when he equated the fortune of the Torah to the honor of the Torah – since the Torah’s fortune is actually its honor!

Let us bring to light the words of Rav Chaim Vital (the disciple of the Arizal) who wrote in very harsh terms that not learning the secrets of the Torah is by all means the negation of the Torah’s honor since the honor of the Torah is necessarily its secrets. Let us examine his words (in his famous introduction):

By all means Rabbi Akiva attained these secrets in this world. It is therefore very fitting that which we find in the Mishna (at the end of Sotah) that ‘When Rabbi Akiva passed away the honor of the Torah disappeared!’ (as we know, Rabbi Akiva would learn piles and piles of Hallachot from each and every tip of the Torah’s letters. By doing so he demonstrated that there is nothing for

naught in the Torah – even the tips of the letters - and there is no greater honor to the Torah than that!) *In my opinion this is also the meaning of the Mishna (Avot 6:2): ‘Rabbi Yehoshua Ben Levi says: Each and every day a heavenly voice emanates from Mt. Chorev and cries out: Oy to the comers of the world from the disgrace of the Torah!’* Certainly so long as they toil only in the revealed portions of the Torah and its stories the Torah wears its mourning widow clothes and sackcloth. The nations of the world can then content: *‘In what way is your Torah better than ours? After all, your Torah is also nothing more than stories from this menial world!’* Certainly there is no greater disgrace to the Torah than that! *If so, then Oy to the comers of this world due to the disgrace of the Torah! And why? Because they do not toil in the wisdom of Kabbalah – as it is specifically this wisdom that gives honor to the Torah!*

We just saw explicitly in the words of Rav Chaim Vital ample support to that which we claimed earlier – namely that the lack of learning the secrets of the Torah is a negation of the Torah’s honor. If so, then Oy to the learners who learn the Torah without its secrets!

Another very important point which Rav Chaim Vital stresses in his words is the positive influence of learning the secrets of the Torah – and not only the adverse affects of not learning them. In other words, he stresses that certainly the Torah is very much honored, esteemed and elevated in everyone’s eyes when it is learned along with its secrets. Along with this Rav Chaim Vital also stresses the direct opposite – that **by ignoring the learning of the Torah’s secrets** as if to say that it is not a beautiful and appealing subject of the Torah (in the words of the Gemorah that we began our discussion with), this is not only the negation of the Torah’s honor – **but certainly its disgrace as well!** Not only do we not honor the Torah by not learning its secrets but we disgrace it as well – God forbid!

With all of the above we can answer the question you asked: **Is it possible that someone may learn the Torah yet actually be disgracing it?** Based on the words of Rav Chaim Vital the answer is obvious. As we saw, according him this is precisely why (Rabbi Yehoshua Ben Levi came) in the Mishna (Avot 6:2) to impress upon us that ‘Oy to the Torah learners who although they actually learn the holy Torah they are actually disgracing it since they are not learning the secrets of the Torah as well!’ [The above-quoted was taken from the book ‘The Rebbe and Yahadut Sepharad]

QUESTION: You claim that one who does not learn Zohar will eventually forget his learning in the revealed parts of the Torah. Where did you derive that? Why should that be?

ANSWER: The answer to this question is written in the book ‘The Rebbe and Yahadut Sepharad’. Rashi (in Eruvin 64a) writes: *He will destroy the honor of Torah and it will eventually be forgotten from him.* Although his beginning words certainly fit the Gemorah, we should very well wonder why he ended off saying that the Torah will eventually be forgotten from him.

The first part is definitely clear – as we explained, certainly the cause of the diminishment of the honor of Torah and its disgrace comes from our negligence to learn the parts of the Torah which one may not find so appealing to him. What we don’t understand is why Rashi ended off by stressing that he is also destined to forget the parts of the Torah that he does find appealing and actually did learn them? Should we just accept Rashi’s words faithfully since he is the Rabbi of all of Israel – or can we also understand intellectually where Rashi is coming from? Upon first impression, we cannot intellectually comprehend why not wanting to learn one part of the Torah that he does not find appealing should necessary cause him to forget the parts of the Torah that he does find appealing and therefore did learn them and even reviewed and memorized them!

Furthermore, before we begin to answer our puzzling question, from the very question itself we discover another very interesting point. The verse ‘*He who shepherds harlots will lose a fortune*’ is understood to be saying that due to his decision to shepherd harlots he will not only lose what he could have potentially earned but that this will also cause him to lose what he currently already has. According to this, the Gemorah that used this verse as a parable to one who shepherds harlots in Torah terms (i.e. by wanting to learn only the parts of the Torah that he finds appealing) and therefore he will lose even more than what he merely did not want to learn. But isn’t that obvious? Certainly since he does not want to learn a particular part of the Torah he will definitely lose out on its knowledge! Rather, it must be that this parable comes to warn us that he will eventually lose that which he did learn as well – even that which he currently does possess in his memory (as Rashi states). This is a very revolutionary nuance in the words of Rashi that not everyone pays attention to. However, be as it may (i.e. whether people notice this nuance or not) our question still requires an answer: Why should he

forget the parts of the Torah that he did learn and even currently possesses in his memory? In my opinion there are two possible answers to our question, both of which are Emet:

We'll begin with a simpler answer, one that touches upon the cause of remembrance and forgetfulness. As we know, what we don't understand properly we quickly forget. We'll demonstrate this with two examples. The first example of this is from the accepted custom to memorize Mishnayot by heart which in itself is a very noble practice (see the book "Hayom Hayom" – 9th of Sivan). It is clearly evident that the more one understands the content of the Mishnayot the easier it will for him to learn them by heart – as well as to memorize them for a long duration. However, one who merely regurgitates the Mishnayot like a parrot without understand what he is saying will quickly forget it (unlike the parrot who may actually remember)! The second example is from our Gemorah learning. We know that when we learn a Talmudic discussion only superficially and fast we will quickly forget it. However, when one invests the time and effort necessary to learn a topic in the Gemorah thoroughly by understanding the roots of that topic he will surely remember it for a very long time. From the abovementioned examples we can surely appreciate the first answer to our question – **why should he forget what he already learned by not learning all the areas in the Torah?** The answer is that clearly by ignoring a particular aspect of the Torah one is limiting his understanding in any another topic he may learn. Not only that, but he may very well have misunderstood and even contorted that which he thinks he understands! Why should that be? As we explained – the Torah is 'rich' in one place and 'poor' in another place. And since he is not willing to learn from the place which is 'rich' (since it is not appealing to him) – his overall understanding in any other place in the Torah is therefore necessarily poor. If so, then we understand very well why Torah that is learned in a limited capacity - in one particular place and not another - is necessarily at risk to be forgotten! Conversely then, when we learn the holy Torah in all its facets our overall understanding is necessarily enriched and our learning will be properly understood and well-founded. In such a case, his Torah will be not quickly be forgotten – if at all! If so, then this matter is applicable a thousand times more so when it

comes to an individual who is missing the learning of the Torah's secrets. After all, regarding such Torah learning without the secrets we know that: **1) the Tikunei Zohar (#30) calls such Torah as 'dry' and poor. 2) The GRA writes that in such a case he does not understand even the revealed parts that he thinks he learned and will not understand any Hallacha correctly. 3) In the words of Rabbi Yaakov Abuchatzirah, without the secrets of the Torah our learner is walking in the dark, like a blind man in a chimney!** With all of the above-said, it is clear like the sun why Rashi wrote that without learning all the areas in the Torah even what he did learn is bound to be forgotten from him. And this matter is not only logical but also evident from the external world around us. It is proven and not only a matter of faith!

A second explanation of why Rashi wrote that his Torah will be forgotten from him is also not hard to understand - as it is based on precisely why this person is learning Torah in the first place. As we presented our first answer we clarified that such a person's Torah learning is surely dry and poor which is the reason why it is bound to be forgotten from him. But now we will shift our focus away from **how** he is learning towards **why** he is learning. It is perfectly clear that when someone learns only the Torah that he finds appealing to his eyes with the Chutzpah and the brashness of one who 'shepherds harlots' and by doing so he negates and undermines the secrets of the Torah which is the part of the Torah that he does not find appealing to his eyes – then this proves that his learning is not for the sake of heaven but rather like one who sheppards harlots (which are the parts of the Torah that he does find appealing) – that is to say he is learning for personal enjoyment. If so, then we all know our sages' famous teaching that *Any love which is dependent upon something else* is bound to be discontinued as soon as the factor upon this love is dependent upon will stop. We find such love to often be dependent upon money or honor. If so we can easily appreciate that as soon as the money or the honor will cease – so will the love. Therefore, when one is learning for honor reasons then as soon as the honor ceases so will his love for the Torah – at which point the Torah will leaving him or he will live the Torah!

[Taken from the book 'The Rebbe and Yahadut Sepharad']